DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 073 498 CS 500 164

AUTHOR	Bryan, George B.
TITLE	Devices for Deviling Classes in Theatre History.
PUB DATE	Dec 72
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Assn. (58th, Chicago, December 27-30, 1972)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Acting; Classical Literature; *Drama; *Library Reference Services; Literary History; *Performance Contracts; Project Training Methods; *Teaching Techniques; *Theater Arts; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS	*Theater History

ABSTRACT

In addition to the use of the lecture-discussion method of teaching theatre history, the author contends that this approach can be augmented by the process of "deviling" (adding spice to) the learning situation. At the University of Vermont, theatre history courses have been taught with a variety of deviling exercises, which include: (1) performance contracting, which is applied to research papers; (2) historical reconstruction, whereby the student is given a copy of an old playbill and assigned the task, through library research, of answering questions concerning the production, historical background, and/or personalities; (3) biography, whereby with similar material, the student focuses his investigation on an historically known actor, his performances, career, and style; (4) investigations of parodies of legitimate plays to determine the original sources and situations; and (5) textual verification, to verify with primary sources the accuracies of statements made in certain theatrical textbooks. (Author/RN)

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DEVICES FOR DEVILING CLASSES IN THEATRE HISTORY

by

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At the University of Vermont, there are four regular one-semester courses in theatre history: The Classical Theatre, Medieval & Renaissance Theatre, 17th & 18th Century Theatre, and 19th & 20th Century Theatre. The prerequisite of each of these classes is an introductory course which combines an overview of theatre history with practical experiences in the arts of the theatre. Courses in dramatic literature and theory are taught concurrently with the history classes, so it is possible to devote nearly all the class time to the study of historical matters and leave the literary problems to other courses.

The major teaching method is the lecture/discussion, but this traditional approach is augmented by a number of devices to "devil" or add spice to the study of theatre history. What follows, then, is a survey of means of engendering interest in the nature and practice of theatre history.

Sad experience has shown that many upper-level students are unacquainted with the inner workings of a library. At UVM the first meeting of every advanced theatre history class is devoted to leading the students through the library and pointing out to them the major resources for theatre research. At this point it has seemed worthwhile to describe the use of such basic works as the Union List of Serials, Education Index, Dramatic Index, and others. The next assignment is presented in the form of a study guide designed to give the student a simple exposure to the use of theatrical reference works [Example #1].

As a means of magnifying the student's writing experiences and of increasing his awareness of the problems of writing theatre history, the research paper has proved helpful. The use of contracts [Ex. 2] diminished some of the problems related to this controversial assignment. The student was presented a list of criteria for each mark (A-F); he was then given the opportunity of contracting with the professor for a grade. If he failed to live up to his contract, he was bound to re-write until the contracted grade was attained. If, on the first try, his grade was higher than contracted for, he received the higher mark. The problem with this device is, of course, the very arbitrariness of the criteria and of the evaluation of the papers. But, then, evaluation is a professor's job.

In a class in Early American Theatre & Drama, a project which could draw together several historical trends was desired, and out of that need grew an exercise centering upon an 18th century playbill [Ex. 3]. The

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C & T 246 Medieval & Renaissance Theatre

You will recall that you have been told the basic characteristics of each of the following reference books. If you analyze the question carefully, you will see that one of the books is more likely than the others to contain the answer you are seeking. Write your answers to the questions.

British Museum. General Catalogue of Printed Books, 263 vols. London, 1960-66.

Cabral, F. and H. Leclercq. Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie, 15 vols. Paris, 1953.

Catalogue Général des Livres Imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale, 211 vols. Paris, 1924-72.

DuCange. Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis, 7 vols. Paris, 1845.

Gregg, W.W. A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration, 4 vols. London, 1939-59.

Harbage, Alfred. Annals of English Drama 975-1700. Rev. S. Schoenbaum. London, 1964.

Hazlitt, W.C. A Manual for the Collector and Amateur of Old English Plays. London, 1892.

Library of Congress Catalogue of Printed Cards.

New Catholic Encyclopedia, 15 vols. New York, 1967.

Stratman, Carl J. Bibliography of Medieval Drama. Berkeley, 1954.

* * * * *

1. How many articles on the Towneley cycle of mystery plays appeared in Speculum prior to 1954? _____ Where is the best place to look for the answer to the same question after 1954 (not on the list)? _____

2. How many books by Hardin Craig, the Kentucky-born medievalist, have been printed in America? _____

3. What is the earliest manuscript of Hilarus' The Raising of Lazarus (Suscitacio Lazari)? _____
the latest printed edition? _____

4. According to Ordericus Vitalis, what is the meaning of neophyti, members of the audience of liturgical plays? _____

_____

5. What are the broad outlines of the life of Rosvitha, the German nun?

_____

_____

_____

6. What is the meaning of the liturgical term "trope"? _____

_____

_____

7. What books on medieval drama are published by the Early English Text Society? (You may want to use the back of the paper.)

8. What company published G. Cohen's Histoire de la mise en scène . . . (1906)? _____

9. How many versions of the Jeu d'Adam (Play of Adam) have been published in England? _____ List them. (Use the back.)

10. What connection have William Griffith and John Daye with 1565 and 1570 editions of Ferrex and Porrex (Gorboduc)? _____

11. In what manuscript must one look to find A Play to the Country People?

_____

This contract is freely entered into by _____, a student in C & T 245 (The Classical Theatre), and George B. Bryan, Assistant Professor of Theatre, on this _____ day of _____, 1972.

As a requirement of the above-mentioned course, the student shall write a research paper on the subject of _____. In evaluating the paper, the professor will apply to following criteria:

For the grade of D, the following guidelines should be followed:
a. no plan of organization need be perceived by the professor.
b. ineffective proofreading be attested by numerous mistakes of grammar and spelling.
c. no fewer than five sources be cited.
d. no acceptable style sheet be followed.
e. little or no critical evaluation be provided by the student.

For the grade of C,
a. a very loose plan of organization be perceived by the professor.
b. hasty proofreading be evidenced by typographicals and errors.
c. between 5 and ten sources be cited.
d. an unsuccessful attempt to follow a style sheet be apparent.
e. a modicum of evaluation be in evidence.

For the grade of B,
a. the paper be well-organized in places and poorly arranged in others.
b. a minimal number of mistakes show close proofreading.
c. more than ten sources be cited.
d. the MLA Style Sheet be closely followed.
e. the student carefully exercise his evaluative function.

For the grade of A,
a. the paper demonstrate a clear organizational principle.
b. the paper be free of typographical and grammatical mistakes.
c. the paper be documented with more than ten sources.
d. the MLA Style Sheet be closely followed.
e. the student demonstrate discernment and discrimination in evaluation.

I, _____(student) contract, under these terms, for the grade of _____.

_____
Professor

Ex. 2 Learning contract

For the BENEFIT of

Mr. Lewis Hallam,

By a Company of COMEDIANS from

L O N D O N,

At the NEW THEATRE, in Water-ſtreet,

This preſent Evening (being the Twenty-ſeventh of *May* 1754) will be preſented a COMEDY, called,

TUNBRIDGE WALKS;

OR,

The Yeoman of Kent.

The Part of *Woodcock* (the Yeoman of *Kent*) by Mr. *Malone*.

Reynard, *Loverworth*, } by { Mr. *Rigby*. Mr. *Miller*.

Captain *Squib*, by Mr. *Lewis Hallam*.

The Part of Mr *Maiden*, by Mr. *Singleton*.

The Part of *Belinda*, by Mrs. *Beeceley*.

Penelope, *Lucy*, Mrs. *Goodfellow*, } by { Mrs. *Clarkſon*. Miſs *Hallam*. Mrs. *Rigby*.

And the Part of *Hillaria*, to be perform'd by Mrs. *Hallam*.

To which will be added, a BALLAD OPERA, called,

The *COUNTRY WAKE*;

OR,

HOB in the WELL.

The Part of *Flora*, to be perform'd by Mrs. *Beeceley*.

Sir *Thomas Tiſſy*. *Friendly*, Old *Hob*, *Dick*, } by { Mr. *Clarkſon*. Mr. *Malone*. Mr. *Miller*. Maſter *L. Hallam*.

Hob's Mother, *Betty*, } by { Mrs. *Clarkſon*. Miſs *Hallam*.

And the Part of Young *Hob*, to be perform'd by Mr. *Hallam*.

Tickets to be had at Mrs. Bridges's, *in* Front-ſtreet, *and of* Mr. Hallam.

BOX 6s. PIT 4s. GALLERY 2s. 6d.

N. B. The Doors will be open'd at Five, and the Play to begin at Seven a Clock. *VIVAT REX.*

1. Identify the theatre mentioned in the handbill. Include its location, history, manager, business policies, & pictures.
2. Discuss managerial policies as revealed by the playbill.
3. Identify the author, date, and brief stage history of the main drama. What version of the script was used?
4. Discuss the afterpiece in the same manner.
5. Briefly identify as many of the players as possible.
6. Try to bring in samples of the incidental music.
7. Describe technical aspects of the production.
8. In conclusion, what might this night in the theatre have been like?

Ex. 3 Playbill project

student was handed a copy of the playbill and sent to the library. A list of tasks including identifying the theatre, assessing managerial policies, analyzing the major production and the afterpiece, and describing the acting company accompanied the playbill. The student then orally reported his findings. He was then asked to reconstruct the programme of that theatre for the weeks prior to and after the engagement referred to in the playbill: in this way he became acquainted with the nature of an extended period of performances in a particular theatre. This project also had the merit of forcing the student to consult the microcard collections Early American Imprints and Three Centuries of Drama, since many of the afterpieces are available only in these sources.

Later in the semester a similar project was assigned, but this time the research involved a performance of a late 19th century actor [Ex. 4]. In addition to performing the previously mentioned tasks, the student was asked to describe the actor's career, to discovery his repertory, and to generalize about his acting style. Furthermore, the student reconstructed as nearly as possible the actor's performance of a particular role, using newspapers, magazines, diaries, etc. as his sources of information.

Since theatre history lends itself to visual studies, an illustrating project was conceived. After the student had completed a research paper, he was asked to search through available literature in an effort to find pictures illustrative of his paper, such as portraits of playwrights, maps of cities, costume prints, floor plans of theatres--whatever might clarify his written study. This exercise assumed greater value when the student was directed to supply a proper bibliographical reference for the source of each of his pictures and to write a caption for each of the illustrations. Thus he was forced to state economically the validity of his pictures to his discussion.

To acquaint the student with some of the problems facing editors of antique texts, he was handed a page from a 16th century play [Ex. 5] and instructed to supply notes on archaic words and expressions, literary allusions, and cryptic passages. He was given no preliminary aid except a referral to the Oxford English Dictionary and Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary.

At one point discussion led to a query about the relation of burlesques, parodies, and adaptations to serious productions. A project grew out of the classroom situation. The students were directed toward plays such as Fielding's Tom Thumb, Foote's The Devil on Two Sticks, and Johnson's The Cobbler of Preston. They were asked to identify the sources of inspiration and to compare the two plays--the original and the descendant. In addition to theatrical lore, a good deal of social and political history was learned.

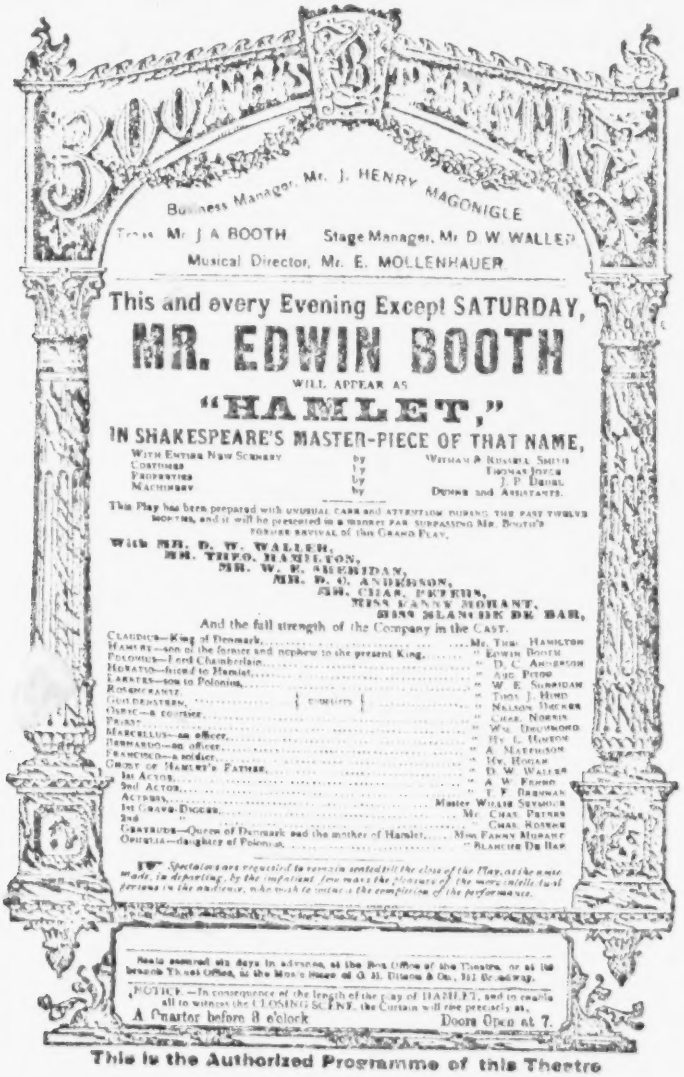
1. Discover the available bibliography on the leading performer advertised in the playbill. Write it up in the proper MLA Style Sheet form.

2. Discuss orally the broad outlines of his career.

3. What plays were in his repertory? Drawing from contemporary sources, describe his performance of one role. Generalize about his acting style.

4. Provide pictures and other illustrative material.

5. Be prepared to discuss the matters alluded to in the previous assignment.



BOOTH'S THEATRE

Business Manager, Mr. J. HENRY MAGONIGLE

Treas. Mr. J. A. BOOTH Stage Manager, Mr. D. W. WALLER

Musical Director, Mr. E. MOLLENHAUER

This and every Evening Except SATURDAY,

MR. EDWIN BOOTH

WILL APPEAR AS

"HAMLET,"

IN SHAKESPEARE'S MASTER-PIECE OF THAT NAME,

With Entire New Scenery	by	William & Richard Smith
Costumes	by	Thomas Joyce
Properties	by	J. P. Deihl
Machinery	by	Dunne and Assistants.

This Play has been prepared with unusual care and attention during the past twelve months, and it will be presented in a manner far surpassing Mr. Booth's former revival of the Grand Play.

With MR. D. W. WALLER,
MR. THEO. HAMILTON,
MR. W. E. SHERIDAN,
MR. D. C. ANDERSON,
MR. CHAS. PETERS,
MISS FANNY MORANT,
MISS BLANCHE DE BAR,

And the full strength of the Company in the Cast.

CLAUDIUS—King of Denmark ..... Mr. Theo. Hamilton
HAMLET—son of the former and nephew to the present King ..... " Edwin Booth
POLONIUS—Lord Chamberlain ..... " D. C. Anderson
HORATIO—friend to Hamlet ..... " Asc. Peters
LAERTES—son to Polonius ..... " W. E. Sheridan
ROSENCRANTZ } courtiers ..... " Thos. J. Hind
GUILDENSTERN } courtiers ..... " Nelson Decker
OSRIC—a courtier ..... " Chas. Norris
PRIEST ..... " Wm. Hollwood
MARCELLUS—an officer ..... " H. L. Hinton
BERNARDO—an officer ..... " A. Matthison
FRANCISCO—a soldier ..... " Mr. Hogan
GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER ..... " D. W. Waller
1st Actor ..... " A. W. Fenno
2nd Actor ..... " T. F. Brennan
ACTORS ..... Master Willie Seymour
1st Grave-Digger ..... Mr. Chas. Peters
2nd " ..... " Chas. Koehne
GERTRUDE—Queen of Denmark and the mother of Hamlet ..... Miss Fanny Morant
OPHELIA—daughter of Polonius ..... " Blanche De Bar

☞ Spectators are requested to remain seated till the close of the Play, as the same made, in departing, by the impatient few mars the pleasure of the many; while kind persons in the audience, who wish to witness the completion of the performance.

Seats secured six days in advance, at the Box Office of the Theatre, or at the branch Ticket Office, in the Music House of C. H. Ditson & Co., 711 Broadway.

NOTICE.—In consequence of the length of the play of HAMLET, and in order to allow all to witness the CLOSING SCENE, the Curtain will rise precisely at

A Quarter before 8 o'clock Doors Open at 7.

This is the Authorized Programme of this Theatre

Ex. 4 Performance exercise

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Valentine : Protheus, and Speed.

Valentine.

Haſe to perſwade, my louing *Protheus*:
Home-keeping youth, haue euer homely wits,
Wer't not affection chaines thy tender dayes
To the ſweet glaunces of thy honour'd Loue,
I rather would entreat thy company,
To ſee the wonders of the world abroad,
Then (liuing dully ſluggardiz'd at home)
Weare out thy youth with ſhapeleſſe idleneſſe.
But ſince thou lou'ſt; loue ſtill, and thriue therein,
Euen as I would, when I to loue begin.

Pro. Wilt thou be gone? Sweet *Valentine* adew,
Thinke on thy *Protheus*, when thou (hap'ly) ſeeſt
Some rare note-worthy obiect in thy trauaile.
Wiſh me partaker in thy happineſſe,
When thou do'ſt meet good hap; and in thy danger,
(If euer danger doe enuiron thee)
Commend thy grieuance to my holy prayers,
For I will be thy beadſ-man, *Valentine*.

Val. And on a loue-booke pray for my ſucceſſe?

Pro. Vpon ſome booke I loue, I'le pray for thee.

Val. That's on ſome ſhallow Storie of deepe loue,
How yong *Leander* croſt the *Helleſpont*.

Pro. That's a deepe Storie, of a deeper loue,
For he was more then ouer-ſhooes in loue.

Val. 'Tis true; for you are ouer-boots in loue,
And yet you neuer ſwom the *Helleſpont*.

Pro. Ouer the Bootes? nay giue me not the Boots.

Val. No, I will not; for it boots thee not.

Pro. What? (gropes:

Val. To be in loue; where ſcorne is bought with
Coy looks, with hart-ſore ſighes: one fading moments
With twenty watchfull, weary, tedious nights; (mirth,
If hap'ly won, perhaps a hapleſſe gaine;
If loſt, why then a grieuous labour won;
How euer; but a folly bought with wit,
Or elſe a wit, by folly vanquiſhed.

Pro. So, by your circumſtance, you call me foole.

Val. So, by your circumſtance, I feare you'll proue.

Pro. 'Tis Loue you cauill at, I am not Loue.

Val. Loue is your maſter, for he maſters you;
And he that is ſo yoked by a foole,
Me thinkes ſhould not be chronicled for wiſe.

Pro. Yet Writers ſay; as in the ſweeteſt Bud
The eating Canker dwels; ſo eating Loue
Inhabits in the fineſt wits of all.

Val. And Writers ſay; as the moſt forward Bud
Is eaten by the Canker ere it blow,
Euen ſo by Loue, the yong, and tender wit
Is turn'd to folly, blaſting in the Bud,
Looſing his verdure, euen in the prime,
And all the faire effects of future hopes.
But wherefore waſte I time to counſaile thee
That art a votary to fond deſire?
Once more adieu: my Father at the Road
Expects my comming, there to ſee me ſhip'd.

Pro. And thither will I bring thee *Valentine*.

Val. Sweet *Protheus*, no: Now let vs take our leaue:
To *Millaine* let me heare from thee by Letters
Of thy ſucceſſe in loue; and what newes elſe
Betideth here in abſence of thy Friend:
And I likewiſe will viſite thee with mine.

Pro. All happineſſe bechance to thee in *Millaine*.

Val. As much to you at home: and ſo farewell. *Exit.*

Pro. He after Honour hunts, I after Loue;
He leaues his friends, to dignifie them more;
I loue my ſelfe, my friends, and all for loue:
Thou *Iulia* thou haſt metamorphis'd me:
Made me neglect my Studies, looſe my time;
Warre with good counſaile; ſet the world at nought;
Made Wit with muſing, weake; hart ſick with thought.

Sp. Sir *Protheus*: 'ſaue you: ſaw you my Maſter?

Pro. But now he parted hence to embarque for *Millain*.

Sp. Twenty to one then, he is ſhip'd already,
And I haue plaid the Sheepe in looſing him.

Pro. Indeede a Sheepe doth very often ſtray,
And if the Shepheard be awhile away.

Sp. You conclude that my Maſter is a Shepheard then, and I Sheepe?

Pro. I doe.

Sp. Why then my hornes are his hornes, whether I wake or ſleepe.

Pro. A ſilly anſwere, and fitting well a Sheepe.

Sp. This proues me ſtill a Sheepe.

Pro. True: and thy Maſter a Shepheard.

Sp. Nay, that I can deny by a circumſtance.

Pro. It ſhall goe hard but 'le proue it by another.

Sp. The Shepheard ſeekes the Sheepe, and not the Sheepe the Shepheard; but I ſeeke my Maſter, and my Maſter ſeekes not me: therefore I am no Sheepe.

Pro. The Sheepe for fodder follow the Shepheard, the Shepheard for foode followes not the Sheepe: thou for wages followeſt thy Maſter, thy Maſter for wages followes not thee: therefore thou art a Sheepe.

Sp. Such another proofe will make me cry baa.

Pro. But do'ſt thou heare: gau'ſt thou my Letter to *Iulia*?

Sp. I

Ex. 5 Editing antique text exercise

Pretend you are a scholar who has discovered the text of an unnamed play. Try to function as an editor and write notes to clarify literary allusions, archaic words and sentences, and cryptic passages. Your notes should contain explications of the following words, but feel free to explain any other terms that baffle you. HINT: this is a 16th century document.

SHAPELESS

MOULD

HAPLY

GRIEVANCE

BEADSMAN

LEANDER

GIVE ME NOT THE BOOTS

BOOTS

WATCHFUL

HAPLESS

CANKER

PRIME

MY HORNS ARE HIS HORNS

You would be wise to begin with the Oxford English Dictionary and Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary, 2 vols. 3rd ed. Since the document is written in 16th century English, the expressions are similar to Shakespeare's.

Frequently throughout the term, the student pretended to be an editor in a project designed to review material covered in class. Presented with a one-page text on theatre history, he was told to edit the material, which was a doctored account of some facet of theatrical history [Ex. 6]. Since he had to correct all errors of fact, the exercise was an aid to review.

When studying 19th century English theatre, much discussion of acting styles ensued, as well as the realization that written words are incapable of expressing the essence of any performance. With this proviso in mind, the student investigated the acting of a renowned performer. The conclusion of the project involved the student's acting a scene as closely as possible to the manner in which it was performed by the English actor. This experiment is frought with danger, but when pursued seriously, can be rewarding.

Vermont has the advantage of having been a theatrical state since early times. Royall Tyler was a Vermonter. Moreover, a number of 19th century theatres are easily available to students and so provide tangible stimuli to theatrical research. The presence of a fine rare books library at the University makes research projects, such as histories of local theatres and studies of touring productions, profitable. Many towns have such resources which ought not to be overlooked.

When it was difficult to convince students that primary sources should be used whenever possible, the textual reliability exercise materialized. Each member of the class was given a simple statement from a general theatre history textbook [Ex. 7] and asked to verify it using primary sources. In many cases they found that primary sources had been copied incorrectly, that information had been misunderstood, and that scholarship had been shoddy. In other instances they gained respect for well-grounded generalizations.

These, then, are just a few devices for deviling classes in theatre history. It is not claimed that any is terribly innovative, that any is perfectly efficacious, that any does not have drawbacks. These projects simply represent responses to specific challenges and problems in teaching theatre history. Hopefully they suggest to you other means of adding spice to our historical activities.

Treat the following material as a present-day editor might. Be sure that every statement is correct. You will need to make some changes to insure that every sentence is credible in terms of our classroom discussions.

"Richard Burbage was the pioneer [builder of theatres]. In 1580 when Shakespeare was barely sixteen, this man who was a carpenter as well as an actor built the first private playhouse in England. Not without right, he called it simply The Theatre. His example inspired the building of the next theatre, a year or so later, closeby in Shoreditch, a northwest section of London. [This theatre was called The Playhouse.]" pp. 155-156

* * * * * * *

"The first well-organized company that came to America were twelve actors gathered in Paris by William Hallam, the bankrupt manager of [the Drury Lane Theatre]. In 1752 he shipped them over to Charleston under the management of his brother Charles. A year later they moved to New York. They found the theatre on Chestnut Street so inadequate that they tore it down and built a new one on its site . . . . After Charles Hallam's death in the West Indies, the company returned to New York under the management of Murray and Kean, and, later, Charles Hallam, Jr." pp. 283-284.

MacGowan, Kenneth and William Melnitz. The Living Stage: A History of the World Theatre. New York, 1955.

Ex. 6 Editing exercise

The following statements are from Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre : An Introduction (New York, 1964), pp. 51, 59, 91, 98. Verify the accuracy of them by consulting primary sources:

> "Although there is some indication that drama appeared in Egypt as early as 4000 B.C., the existing references are scarce and unclear."
>
> "The appearance of the skene is much debated. Most of the plays are set before temples or palaces, but some take place outside of caves or tents, or in wooded landscapes. There is much controversy over the extent to which the stage may have been altered to meet these differing demands."
>
> "Fourth, Seneca's plays show many violent actions."
>
> "Most scholars have argued that the church abandoned the drama when it was moved outdoors."

Treat the following passages from Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama from AEschylus to Anouilh (London, 1949), pp. 251, 333. in the same manner:

> "In the Christmas season of 1657-68 Queen Elizabeth had eight plays acted for her delight--As Plain as can be, The Painful Pilgrimage, Jack and Jill, Six Fools, Wit and Will, Prodigality, Orestes, The King of Scots."
>
> "Suffering from a disease he knew would soon bring his end, he [Molière] ironically penned his last comedy Le Malade imaginaire (The Imaginary Invalid, 1673), at the fourth performance of which he collapsed and died."